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Guidelines for third-cycle double degrees and joint degrees

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1 Introduction

These guidelines do not apply to the establishment of third-cycle educational collaboration with EU funding.

2 The purpose of the document

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide instructions for how to develop the documents required for the Vice-Chancellor's standpoint on collaboration with international higher education institutions (HEIs) in the field of education, where the outcome is a third-cycle double degree or a third-cycle joint degree. The guidelines also include information on the existing statutory requirements.

The Higher Education Act is the principal basis for the activities of all Swedish HEIs. The Higher Education Ordinance is a specification of the Higher Education Act and applies to all Swedish HEIs. The Higher Education Act does not regulate the possibility for awarding double degrees. Universities and university colleges may award joint degrees in accordance with Higher Education Act, chapter 1, section 17.

The establishment of third-cycle educational collaboration leading to a double or a joint degree is a resource-intensive and time-consuming process. Adequate planning by the member of staff initiating the collaboration is required. The general duration of time from initiation to implementation is around 8–10 months. For a joint degree, the total time can amount to one year. For a double degree, step 1 takes around 2–4 months, step 2 around 1–3 months and step 3 around 1–2 months.

3 Definitions

3.1 Double Degree

A double degree is the result of a doctoral student being admitted to a third-cycle programme offered through educational collaboration between two or more partner HEIs. A doctoral student intending to pursue a third-cycle programme leading to a double degree within the frames of educational collaboration must fulfil the degree requirements from two or more HEIs, and there must be efficiency gains from, for example, undertaking courses. Each HEI is primarily responsible for its own courses and programmes and must ensure that these are conducted in accordance with national and local laws and regulations, requirements and guidelines. This means that there is only a minor overlap between study programmes offered at the partner HEIs. On completion of the education, two or more degree certificates are issued – one from each HEI including a Diploma Supplement (DS) stating that the degree is the result of a study programme conducted at two or more partner HEIs.

3.2 Joint Degree

"The term joint degree refers to a qualification that may be awarded by the higher education institutions that have jointly organised courses and programmes that can lead to the award of the qualification" (Higher Education Act, chapter 1, section 17). It is not a matter of a new award category; instead, this is about enabling two or more HEIs to jointly organise and offer courses and programmes resulting in a joint degree of the same kind that they otherwise are individually entitled to award. The joint doctoral degree is thus based on *one* joint study programme, *one* public defence of *one* doctoral thesis and *one* degree certificate. According to the Higher Education Ordinance, chapter 6, section 10, point 3, the degree certificate must state whether "the qualification forms part of a joint degree as laid down in Section 17 of Chapter 1 of the Higher Education Act".

4 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

To establish a third-cycle educational collaboration that will lead to a double or joint degree, evidence is required showing that there is long-term and firmly established collaboration between the HEIs at the time of the submission of the application. This is to be confirmed by existing declarations of intent, such as a Memorandum of Understanding, a Research Collaboration Agreement or a Letter of Intent[1], or joint research projects, joint publications and/or joint education activities.

The first step for a person who wants to apply for a third-cycle educational collaboration is to confirm that there is a current and valid Memorandum of Understanding between Luleå University of Technology and the HEI(s) involved. Luleå University of Technology has a specific template for MoUs. Such agreements between HEIs are signed by the Vice-Chancellor, upon a proposal from the Head of Department.

When the MoU is signed, the process of applying to establish educational collaboration begins.

5 Practice

5.1 The planning of educational collaboration on third-cycle double or joint degrees

- If Luleå University of Technology is to enter into a general agreement with another HEI on third-cycle educational collaboration leading to a double or a joint degree, documentation must exist showing that the third-cycle courses and study

[1] See Guidelines for international collaboration agreements.

programmes offered by the other university are of sufficient quality, scope and stability. Until the documentation above exists, no university-wide or department-wide agreements can be made.

- The purpose of allowing third-cycle courses and study programmes leading to a double degree or a joint degree is to strengthen the career opportunities of the doctoral student on the international labour market and to facilitate synergies and broadened expertise at the universities.

- A third-cycle educational collaboration leading to a double or a joint degree cannot be established retroactively, and doctoral students already admitted to a third-cycle programme at Luleå University of Technology cannot retrospectively be admitted to a joint study programme leading to either a double or a joint degree within the frames of a third-cycle educational collaboration.

6 Conditions and requirements for double degrees

The establishment of third-cycle educational collaboration with a double degree at Luleå University of Technology is a step-by-step process.

Step 1
Step 1 includes drawing up a Step-1 agreement, after the MoU is signed. Supporting documents to this agreement describe the overall conditions for educational collaboration between the HEIs regarding a double degree, and include a description indicating that the departments at Luleå University of Technology can begin to cooperate with the relevant departments at the partner HEI. Step 1 is completed when the strategic values of such fundamental collaboration are approved by the Vice-Chancellor. This agreement is prepared from a university-wide point of view and signed by the Vice-Chancellor. Luleå University of Technology has a specific template for Step-1 agreements that must be used.

Step 2
The second step describes the programme-specific requirements, the qualitative parts of the particular third-cycle educational collaboration and the added value for the doctoral student to pursue third-cycle studies leading to a double degree. The accompanying Step-2 agreement is prepared at department level, in accordance with the laid-down template for Step-2 agreements.

Step 3
The third and final step concerns the specific details about the individual doctoral student, in addition to the individual study plan for third-cycle studies (ISP). The agreement, to be signed by the Head of Department and the doctoral student, is developed on the basis of the laid-down template for Step-3 agreements.

6.1 Step 1 – Detailed description

The supervisor (the applicant) planning to initiate a third-cycle educational collaboration leading to a double degree must first secure support for this with the responsible Head of Department. The main reason for this is that administrative resources are in principle committed as soon as the study programme begins. The applicant submits a written application, signed by the Head of Department, to the Faculty Board's administrative officer. The preparation of the matter then begins for the decision by the Faculty Boards. The preparation process includes a presentation of the matter at a meeting of the Faculty-wide Group for Third-cycle Studies. The applicant is invited to attend the meeting during the presentation. If the proposed educational collaboration is considered to be of good quality, the Faculty Boards recommend that the Vice-Chancellor approve the Step-1 agreement.

Below is a list of requirements to be met. The applicant must in the application describe how the intended collaboration fulfils these requirements.

Educational collaboration requirements
The following requirements must be fulfilled before the Faculty Boards recommend the Vice-Chancellor to approve the Step-1 agreement:

- The intended third-cycle educational collaboration must be of strategic value to Luleå University of Technology. The national and international academic ranking and brand (in a broad sense) of the HEI(s) and compatibility between the HEIs must be considered.
- The intended study programme must not be set up as an isolated case for a single doctoral student. The applicant must prove that the intention of the study programme is long-term and involves doctoral students at the HEIs concerned. The expected number of doctoral students must be specified.
- The intended third-cycle educational collaboration must create future values for research and education conducted at Luleå University of Technology. Note that the university-wide agreement allows all departments and divisions at Luleå University of Technology to apply to establish third-cycle educational collaboration. If applicable, the applicant should indicate other possible units/subjects within Luleå University of Technology that may benefit from the agreement.

Grounds for the choice of partner HEIs
Grounds for the choice of collaborative partner(s) must be included in the application. It must include an assessment of the possible partner HEI based on the following criteria:

- Strategy and policy – should be consistent with strategies of Luleå University of Technology.

- Reputation and quality – Luleå University of Technology acquires a clear profile through its partners, it is important that the collaboration strengthens and not weakens our brand.
- The accreditation of the HEI in its home country – it is important to have reliable information about the quality.
- Demand for the study programme/collaboration from students, teachers and researchers.
- Administrative processes and national rules and regulations – may have an impact on how "cumbersome" the collaboration will be.
- Administrative capacity – how much resources for administrative support are available?
- Reciprocity – what is the benefit for each HEI from the intended collaboration?

6.2 Step 2 – Detailed description

When the HEIs have signed the Step-1 agreement, the applicant can prepare the Step-2 application. The application must be in writing and addressed to the responsible Faculty Board. The application is submitted to the Faculty Board's administrative officer who is responsible for preparation of the matter for the decision by the responsible Faculty Board. The preparation process includes a presentation of the application at a meeting of the Faculty-wide Group for Third-cycle Studies. The applicant is invited to attend the meeting during the presentation. If the application meets the quality requirements below, the Faculty Board recommends the responsible Head of Department to approve the Step-2 agreement.

Educational collaboration requirements for the Step-2 agreement
The following requirements must be fulfilled before the Faculty Board recommends the Head of Department to approve the Step-2 agreement:

- The third-cycle educational collaboration is clearly described. The application must include a description of the research domain, how the research and the study programme are to be implemented together with the partner HEI, the strategic importance, the purpose of the study programme, a schedule, the governance of the study programme, and the scientific and educational benefits both for the doctoral students and for each HEI.

- The HEIs must develop an equivalent study programme. The application must include a draft on course requirements, publications and other requirements to be fulfilled by the doctoral student to be awarded a degree, as well as how much time that the doctoral student is expected to spend at each HEI. It is important to specify the requirements of each HEI to clarify what the doctoral student is expected to achieve at each HEI in order to fulfil the requirements for a doctoral degree at each HEI.

6.3 Step 3 – Detailed description

When the Step-2 agreement has been signed by both parties, the HEIs may admit doctoral students to the joint third-cycle programme, and at this stage, the Step-3 agreement is to be drafted. This is an agreement signed by Luleå University of Technology and each individual doctoral student. It is drawn up in accordance with the laid-down template and must fulfil the requirements specified in section 8 of these guidelines. Besides the Step-3 agreement, the Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that the individual study plan is developed. It is important to specify in the individual study plan that the doctoral student pursues a third-cycle study programme aiming at a double degree.

7 Conditions and requirements for joint degrees

According to the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance, a condition for the award of a joint degree is that this involves a joint study programme, i.e. a programme that is jointly planned and implemented by the relevant HEIs. The study programme is jointly developed by the involved HEIs before the actual start of the programme. This means that the HEIs must jointly develop a study plan and cooperate in admission and examination matters at the same time as studies and examinations that are carried out at the partner HEI automatically are acknowledged and credits transferred. When the studies are completed, the HEIs award a joint degree certificate showing that the doctoral student has pursued a joint study programme leading to a joint degree.

In accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance, a HEI may take part in educational collaboration leading to a joint degree only if the collaboration is based on a written agreement.[2] Luleå University of Technology has specific templates to facilitate the drafting of written agreements.

The establishment of third-cycle educational collaboration with a joint degree is a step-by-step process.

A condition for a joint degree is that an established and well-functioning double-degree collaboration between the two HEIs already exists.

Step 1
When a MoU is established, the work on Step 1 can begin. Besides the Swedish statutory requirements, a third-cycle study programme leading to a joint degree must fulfil the University's collaboration requirements. In Step 1, the applicant must describe the overall conditions for the joint-degree collaboration between the two HEIs, and also state that the departments at Luleå University of Technology may initiate collaboration with the relevant

[2] The Higher Education Ordinance, chapter 6, section 11.

department(s) at the partner HEI. Step 1 is implemented when the strategic value of such fundamental collaboration is approved.

Step 2
Step 2 includes the study programme-specific details, the qualitative parts of the particular study programme and the added value for the doctoral student to pursue third-cycle studies leading to a joint degree.

Step 3
In the final step, an agreement between the doctoral student and the two HEIs and an individual study plan will be signed. The individual study plan must specify that the doctoral student pursues a third-cycle study programme aiming at a joint degree. Step 2 and step 3 run parallelly in cases of educational collaboration leading to a joint degree.

7.1 Step 1 – Detailed description

The supervisor (the applicant) planning to initiate third-cycle educational collaboration leading to a joint degree, must first secure support for this with the responsible Head of Department. The main reason for this is that administrative resources are in principle committed as soon as the study programme begins. The applicant submits an application in writing, signed by the Head of Department, to the Faculty Boards' administrative officer. Thereafter, the preparation of the matter begins for the decision by the Faculty Boards. The preparation process includes a presentation of the matter at a meeting of the Faculty-wide Group for Third-cycle Studies. The applicant is invited to attend the meeting during the presentation. If the proposed educational collaboration is considered to be of good quality, the Faculty Boards recommend that the Vice-Chancellor approve the Step-1 agreement.

Below is a list of requirements to be met. The applicant must describe in the application how the intended collaboration fulfils these requirements.

Educational collaboration requirements
The following requirements must be fulfilled before the Faculty Boards recommend the Vice-Chancellor to approve the Step-1 agreement:

- The proposed third-cycle educational collaboration must be of strategic value to Luleå University of Technology. The national and international academic ranking and brand (in a broad sense) of the HEI(s) and compatibility between the HEIs have been considered.
- The intended study programme must not be set up as an isolated case for a single doctoral student. The applicant must prove that the intention of the study programme is long-term and involves doctoral students at all the HEIs concerned. The expected number of doctoral students must be specified.
- The intended third-cycle educational collaboration creates future value for research and education conducted at Luleå University of Technology. Note that the university-

wide agreement allows all departments and divisions at Luleå University of Technology to apply to establish third-cycle educational collaboration. The applicant should indicate other possible units/subjects within Luleå University of Technology that may benefit from the agreement.

7.2 Steps 2 and 3 – Detailed description

The awarding of a joint degree based on a joint programme is a complex process, since it requires that at least two individual HEIs coordinate their rules and regulations related to third-cycle courses and study programmes. International educational collaboration is especially complicated since education systems and laws of at least two countries must be integrated and complied with. For this reason, and different from the double degree, the next two agreements (steps 2 and 3) must be prepared simultaneously. In the Step-3 agreement, both HEIs must agree on all details concerning the doctoral student.

When the HEIs have signed the Step-1 agreement, the applicant may prepare the Step-2 application. The application, signed by the Head of Department, is to be submitted to the Faculty Board's administrative officer. The preparation of the matter then begins for the decision by the Faculty Boards. The preparation process includes a presentation of the application at a meeting of the Faculty-wide Group for Third-cycle Studies. The applicant is invited to attend the meeting during the presentation. If the application meets the quality requirements below, the Faculty Board recommends the responsible Head of Department to approve the Step-2 agreement.

Educational collaboration requirements for step 2 and step 3
The following requirements must be fulfilled for the Faculty Boards to recommend the Head of Department to approve the Step-2 agreement:

- Academic as well as administrative contact persons must be appointed at the partner HEIs.
- The third-cycle study programme is clearly described. The application must include a description of the research domain, how the research will be conducted together with the partner HEI, the strategic importance, the purpose of the programme, a schedule, the governance of the programme, funding, and the scientific and educational benefits both for the doctoral students and for each HEI.
- The agreement of the joint doctoral education programme must also specify the items described in section 8 of these guidelines.
- The application must include supporting documents to the Step-3 agreement showing that the departments fulfil all applicable requirements in accordance with section 8.

Educational collaboration requirements for the Step-3 agreement

When the Step-2 agreement has been signed by both parties, the HEIs may admit students to the joint third-cycle study programme and prepare the Step-3 agreement. The departments must sign an agreement with the doctoral student, and it is important to ensure that the agreement fulfils all applicable requirements. Besides the Step-3 agreement, the Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that the individual study plan is developed. The individual study plan must specify that the doctoral student pursues a third-cycle study programme aiming at a joint degree.

8 Written agreement requirements

1. Project
Supervisors at Luleå University of Technology and at the partner university jointly formulate a proposal for a research project. The research project includes a budget (income and expenses) and possibly also a joint application for financing the project. The individual study plan (see below) must have been signed and supervisors appointed.

2. Recruitment and admission
The written agreements must indicate how, when and where the announcement of a place of study, application procedures and admission should be made. Consideration must be given to the general and specific entry requirements required for admission to third-cycle courses and study programmes at each HEI. The language requirements that apply must also be considered. It must be clear who is responsible for selections and for issuing admission decisions at each HEI. Upon admission, it must also be clear whether the doctoral student is admitted to a third-cycle study programme leading to a double degree or to a joint degree. Retroactive admissions to third-cycle courses and study programmes leading to a double or a joint degree are not permitted.

3. Financing and fees
In accordance with Swedish law, a doctoral student may only be admitted if the HEI finds the financing secured for the entire study programme. Therefore, it is necessary to secure that there is reliable financing for the entire period of studies, and that the written agreement lays down how the financing responsibility should be divided between the cooperating HEIs, and who is responsible for the financing if the original financing ceases. Note that third-cycle study programmes only last for three years in some countries and for four years in Sweden. The written agreement must thus secure the doctoral student's right to a degree without the risk of Luleå University of Technology having to finance parts of the programme for which another HEI is responsible and vice versa.

The parties specify who is responsible for financing the doctoral student's livelihood, the costs that are expected, any tuition fees, and the doctoral student's costs for

insurance, health care, subsistence costs, travels, premises and equipment. It is desirable that the written agreement specifies how costs incurred in connection with the work on the thesis should be financed (travels, conference fees, printing and distribution of the thesis, etc.).

4. The content and implementation of the programme

The written agreement must indicate the length of the programme (three or four years), the number of credits, the doctoral courses and when they are supposed to be undertaken, and the proportion of the programme carried out at each HEI. The rules and regulations of the responsible HEI regarding, for example, examinations must be taken into account. The procedure to be applied in case the programme cannot be completed within the stipulated period of time must be indicated.

5. Study plans and follow-ups

The general syllabus laid-down for the third-cycle subject area to which the doctoral student is admitted at Luleå University of Technology constitutes the steering document for double or joint degrees awarded by Luleå University of Technology.

Planning and revision of planned education must be documented in an individual study plan (ISP). The plan specifies which parts of the education will be undertaken at which HEI, in addition to how progress should be monitored. The written agreement will regulate which HEI, and thus which principal supervisor, will be responsible for continuous monitoring of the doctoral student's progress within the study programme. If the partner HEI offers a three-year doctoral study programme, the planning must show how the coordination between this programme and the four-year programme at Luleå University of Technology should be done. Each ISP must include a section specifying some of the most important study programme commitments for the supervisor(s) and the doctoral student, respectively. That ISP section must be signed by the supervisor(s), the doctoral student and the Head of Department. Commitments not being fulfilled at the time of the revision must be commented on by the supervisor(s) as well as by the doctoral student.

6. Supervisor matters

The written agreement must specify the roles of each supervisor and the division of responsibility between them. Consideration must be given to what applies if a supervisor resigns from work and who is responsible for resolving conflicts, if any, between the doctoral student and the responsible principal supervisor.

7. Ladok

The HEIs must establish a procedure for the transfer of information of credits awarded between the HEIs. The agreement must indicate who is responsible for the transfer of such information. All doctoral students admitted to Luleå University of Technology must be registered in the study administration system Ladok. Upon admission and

award of the qualification, it must be clarified whether this concerns a double or a joint degree.

8. The doctoral thesis and the defence of the doctoral thesis

The written agreement must specify the requirements for the defence, publication form, preparatory review, if any, of the doctoral thesis (how, by whom and when) as well as the scope and form of the defence of the doctoral thesis. The design of the degree certificate and content in the Diploma Supplement (DS) must also be indicated. Upon a double degree for which Luleå University of Technology issues the degree certificate and the accompanying DS, the agreement must also indicate that the doctoral thesis has been assessed by two HEIs.

9. Intellectual property rights

The written agreement must include guidelines for the rights management, for example intellectual property rights, and state that the requirements of Luleå University of Technology on visibility and publishing must be fulfilled.

10. Rights

The Ethics Policy for Luleå University of Technology/the subject is to be attached and if the partner university demands a clarification, it must be included. Rules and guidelines on work environment and staff matters must also be indicated. A supervisor change must be discussed and approved by the deciding bodies of both the home university and the partner university.

11. Responsibility for services

The written agreement must specify the person responsible for reception, services, accommodation matters, etc. It must also indicate the contact persons at the participating HEI(s) and to whom the doctoral student may turn in case of complaints.